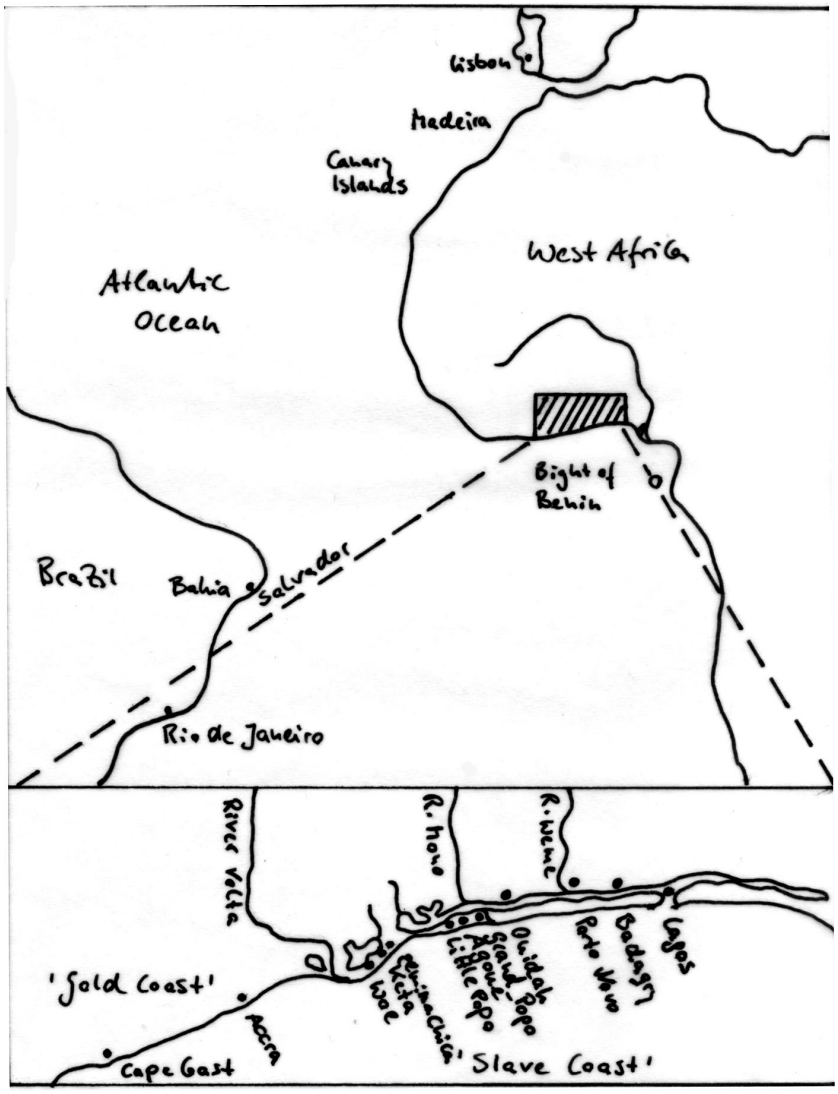
Map of the South Atlantic Route and the West African Coast



Drawing: Silke Strickrodt.

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The Brazilian Diaspora to West Africa in the Nineteenth Century

> For the cultural historian, there is nothing more interesting than that class of people which is particularly numerous at Agué and Weida and which calls itself Portuguese (Zöller 1885: I, 182-183).

In 1884, when the scramble among European nations for colonies in Africa had just begun, the German journalist Hugo Zöller visited the coastal settlements in today's Togo and Benin. This visit was part of an extensive trip during which he explored the potential of the West African regions that Germany was interested in, officially as a journalist commissioned by the *Kölnische Zeitung* but secretly as a German government agent. At Agoué and Ouidah, which were soon to become part of the French colony of Dahomey, Zöller was struck by the existence of a group of people who, although heterogeneous in appearance (from "the pure yellow-white of the Southern European to the darkest brownish black" of the Africans), distinguished themselves from the rest of the local population by particular cultural traits and social aspirations. Not only did they describe themselves as "Portuguese", but they were lusophone, adhered to the Roman Catholic Church and had the "easy, agreeable manners" of Southern Europeans (Zöller 1885: I, 182-183). Zöller's observations, however, are nothing exceptional. Other European visitors to the coastal parts of present-day Togo, Benin, and Nigeria in the nineteenth and twentieth century have also noted these people, describing them variously as "Portuguese", "Brazilians", "Afro-Brazilians" or "Aguda". Traces of their cultural influence can be found in the region even today, in the form of Portuguese family names and a particular Brazilian heritage, including the architectural style of many buildings, religious practices, dishes such as feijoada, kousido and mokeka, as well as the memory of ancestral links to Brazil.

This Brazilian diaspora on the West African coast was a reflection of the close trade relations that had existed between this region and Brazil, particular the latter's Northeastern province of Bahia, during the era of the slave trade. It had resulted from several waves of immigration experienced by the West African coast during the nineteenth century, involving people of various backgrounds and motivations. Some were slave traders who had settled on the coast in order to engage in the "illegal" slave trade. Most, however, were ex-slaves from Brazil (and, to a lesser extent, from Cuba) who had returned to West Africa after the Male revolt in Bahia in 1835 – in fact, they were still returning by the time Zöller visited the coast in 1884. By the end of the century, these disparate groups of people began to form a coherent community, unified by the Portuguese language, the Roman Catholic religion, and the practice of intermarriage that was common among them (Law 2004c: 185-187). In this paper, I will discuss the origins and the evolution of this Brazilian diaspora on the West African coast and its impact on the local societies in the nineteenth century.

In this discussion, I use the term "Brazilian" to refer to these communities, as it reflects their strong cultural link to Brazil. However, it should be noted that in the period the people did not usually identify themselves in this way. This term, as well as the term "Afro-Brazilian" which is widely used in the academic literature, is purely a scholarly designation imposed on them retrospectively. From the contemporary documents, including Zöller's report, it appears that if these people identified themselves as a group, then as "Portuguese". This is a reflection of the colonial ties that existed between Portugal and Brazil until 1822, the year of Brazil's independence from Portugal. Even after this date, many Brazilians continued to identify themselves, culturally, as Portuguese. This, at least, was evidently the case in West Africa. However, as will be discussed in greater detail below, the "Brazilians" on the West African coast were a highly heterogeneous group and it is not clear whether a common sense of identity existed before the end of the nineteenth century (Law 2004c: 185; Law/Mann 1999: 324).

The indigenous societies on the West African coast in the nineteenth century used a number of names to refer to the Brazilians. In the area of Dahomey and Yoruba land, the term "Aguda" was used (and is still common in the Bight of Benin today). It was applied to the

Portuguese in general, including Brazilians, and referred to Portuguese and Brazilians of European as well as African descent (Law 2004a: 350). At Lagos, they were called "Amaro". This is a Yoruba term, which according to Kopytoff commonly meant "those who had been away from home" (1965: 87). A variant of this term, "Maro", also appears as the name of one of Ouidah's quarters that was settled by Brazilians. Law has noted that it apparently comes from the interior, where it is documented as the name given to quarters settled by foreign, particularly Muslim, merchants (Law 2004b: 350, 2004c: 182). At Accra (and possibly on the Gold Coast more generally), the Brazilian repatriates were knows as "Tabon". This apparently derived from the Portuguese greeting "Está bom?", which they used (Parker 2000: 14, 40 n. 62).

Most of the Brazilian immigrants settled in that part of the West African coast, which in the pre-colonial period was known to traders of most European nations as the "Slave Coast", but to the Portuguese and Brazilians as "Costa da Mina". It extended from the River Volta, in the west, to the Lagos channel, in the east, and comprised the coastal areas of today's Togo and Benin and parts of Ghana and Nigeria. It roughly corresponded to the Bight of Benin, which is the term often used in the scholarly literature dealing with the Brazilian settlement in West Africa. However, some Brazilians also immigrated into the area to the west of the River Volta, that is the "Gold Coast", which resulted in the formation of a Brazilian community at Accra (Parker 2000: 14). Therefore, in this paper I will use the term "West African coast", by which I mean specifically the coast between Accra and Lagos, as well as "Bight of Benin" when referring to the region from the River Volta to Lagos.

The region between Accra and Lagos was occupied by a number of African groups and states. These were, from west to east, Ga-Dangme, Anlo, Genyi, Hula, Dahomey, Porto Novo, Badagry, and Lagos. The Ga-Dangme, two closely related people, occupied the area to the west of the River Volta, which Europeans in the period usually referred to as the "eastern Gold Coast". Accra, at the western limits of this area, in fact consisted of three Ga towns, Nleshi, Kinka and Osu, which were drawn together to form the city of Accra only in the second half of the nineteenth century under British colonial rule. Each of the three towns was the location of a European trade fort, belonging to

the English, Dutch, and Danes respectively. The coast between Accra and the River Volta was dotted with European trade forts, mainly belonging to the Danes. To the east of the River Volta, there was Anlo, an Ewe state. Its major port was at Keta (in present-day Ghana), which was also the site of a Danish trade fort. Genyi, known to the Europeans as "Little Popo" after its major port town (present-day Aneho, in Togo), occupied the area corresponding roughly to today's Togo's coastal parts. Two more port towns, Agoué and Porto Seguro (present-day Agbodrafo), emerged in this region in the 1820s and 1830s respectively as a result of civil wars at Little Popo. The Hula state, called Great Popo by the Europeans, was situated around the mouth of the River Mono, with its port at Grand Popo (in present-day Benin). The central part of the "Slave Coast" was dominated by the kingdom of Dahomey, the most powerful state in the Bight of Benin in that period. Dahomey's major port was Ouidah, which was one of the most important embarkation points for slaves in the history of the trade, more than one million slaves having been shipped across the Atlantic from there. Ouidah was the location of three European trade forts, owned by the English, the French and the Portuguese respectively. There were two more Dahomian ports further east, at Godomey and Cotonou (in present-day Benin). Porto Novo and Badagry were two independent states that had been founded in the eighteenth century by refugees from states that had fallen victim to Dahomey's expansion. At the eastern end of the region described here, there was the Yoruba state of Lagos (in present-day Nigeria).

As indicated by its name, the "Slave Coast" had played a major role in the transatlantic slave trade. With the abolition and criminalisation of the trade by the European powers, first and foremost the British, after 1807, the trade ended on the neighbouring Gold Coast due to the British presence and influence there. However, the Bight of Benin continued to be a major supplier of slaves for the transatlantic trade for another sixty years, becoming one of the hotspots for the "illegal" slave trade. The British tried to suppress this trade by posting anti-slave trade patrols of its navy on the coast as well as by mounting pressure on the African states in the region. In 1851, they bombarded Lagos and deposed its ruler in an attempt to end the slave trade there and established an official presence in the form of a consulate. In 1861 Lagos was annexed. At the western end of the Bight of Benin, too, the

British encroached on African sovereignty in the period. In 1850, they bought the Danish forts on the West African coast, including the one at Keta in the Anlo region. From then on, they gradually extended their influence over Anlo, which in June 1874 was incorporated into the British Gold Coast territory. A month later, the British Crown Colony of the Gold Coast and Lagos was created by Royal Proclamation (Hargreaves 1963: 166-174; Newbury 1961: 49-76). However, apart from these encroachments at its eastern and western ends, the Bight of Benin remained under African control until the European colonial take-over the 1880s.

1. Literature review

Zöller has proved prescient with regard to the interest, which the Brazilians on the West African coast have attracted from historians. One hundred and thirty years after his visit to the coast, there is a veritable boom in research done on these people: books, articles, and dissertations have been published by Brazilianists, Africanists, historians, and anthropologists interested in culture, ethnicity, religion, and memory, among others. This increasing interest needs to be seen in the context of the rise of Atlantic history as field since the 1990s, although it should be noted that the pioneering study on the Brazilian diaspora to West Africa, Pierre Verger's *Flux et reflux de la traite des nègres entre le Golfe de Bénin et Bahia de Todos os Santos du XVIIe au XIX siècle* (1968), pre-dated the classic text of Atlantic studies, Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993), by several decades. Verger was the first to discuss the interconnections between Brazil, specifically its Bahia province, and the Bight of Benin during the era of the slave trade. Rather than limiting his discussion to the forced migration of roughly two million slaves from the Bight of Benin to Bahia, he emphasized the bilateral and constant nature of the relations between the two regions, including the return of several thousand liberated slaves to the West African coast in the nineteenth century.

Strictly, however, Verger was not the first to write about the Brazilians in West Africa, although his tome, comprising some 700 pages, was unprecedented in scale as well as regards the wealth of archival material that it presents. First, the history of the Brazilian settlement in the Bight of Benin had been the object of study of local historians in

Africa before. The result of these studies includes two manuscripts dealing with the Brazilian community at Agoué by the French missionary Pierre Pelofy, who between 1911 and 1946 was curate of the French Catholic Mission at Agoué (Pelofy 2002), and a booklet of the Lagosian Anthony Laotan, *The Torch-Bearers or Old Brazilian Colony in Lagos*, dating from 1843. Second, there are some short works by scholars, such as the essays by Lorenzo D. Turner (1942) and J. F. de Almeida Prado (written in 1849). A mine of information – if not a strictly "scholarly" work – is Antonio Olinto's memoir of his two-year sojourn in Lagos in the early 1960s as cultural attaché at the Brazilian embassy in Nigeria, entitled *Brasileiros na Africa* (1964). Olinto was a friend of Verger (who also was in Nigeria at the time writing his *Flux and Reflux*) and they shared the interest in the Brazilians on the West African coast. Two of his book's chapters are devoted to the Brazilian community at Lagos, describing its history and cultural life. Most fascinating, he gives much information concerning the life and family histories of individual members of the Brazilian community who he had met (mainly, but not exclusively) at Lagos, including individuals who had made the passage from Brazil to West Africa in the early 1900s. In the 1960s, there also appeared a number of articles dealing with the life and career of prominent members of the Brazilian community in the nineteenth century: Domingos Martins (Ross 1965), Geraldo da Lima (Amenumey 1968) and Felix Francisco de Souza (Ross 1969), who were all notorious slave traders.

Following the publication of Verger's study, another important milestone in the historiography of Brazilian settlement in the Bight of Benin was Michael Jerry Turner's unpublished PhD thesis on the impact of the Brazilian immigrants on the West African coast (1975). Turner focuses on the part of West Africa that became the French colony of Dahomey at the end of the nineteenth century and is now the Republic of Benin. In its structure, his thesis follows the return movement of the ex-slaves from Bahia to the West African coast, discussing the situation of slaves and emancipated slaves in Brazilian society, the Male revolt, their passage to Africa and their integration into coastal society. The particular value of this study lies in the large number of oral family traditions, which he had collected from the descendants of the Brazilians in the early 1970s.

In 1985, two more, important studies appeared. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha's monograph, *Negros, estrangeiros: os escravos libertos e sua volta à Africa*, discusses the settlement of Brazilian ex-slaves at Lagos. Her focus is on the evolution of their cultural identity during the colonial period, with one chapter being devoted to the importance of the Roman Catholic religion for the settlers and the latter's role in the establishment of Roman Catholicism on the West African coast. In the same year appeared a study by Marianno Carneiro da Cunha, her husband, on the Brazilian architecture in the Yoruba area of Nigeria and Dahomey. This essay was published posthumously, Marianno having died in 1980, and was accompanied by an introduction by Manuela Carneiro da Cunha and photographs of Brazilian architecture by Pierre Verger and reproductions of historical photographs of buildings and Brazilian individuals. Both these studies are based on research done in Nigeria during eight months in 1875.

Studies dealing with the history of the Brazilians on the West African Coast have abounded since the mid-1990s. They include articles dealing with the careers of prominent individuals (Amos 2000; Law 2001b; 2004a), particular settlements (Akibode 1988-1989; Law 2001a; 2004c: 155-188; Lindsay 1994; Soumonni 2003; 2005; Strickrodt 2004) and particular aspects, such as ethnicity (Law 2004b; Matory 1999) and cultural identity (Guran 2000; Yai 2001). Only one study shall be pointed out here. This is an article, co-authored by Robin Law and Kristin Mann, on the links and reciprocal cultural influences between Brazil and West Africa during the era of the slave trade (Law/Mann 1999). Using the concept of an "Atlantic community" and taking up the thread where Verger left it thirty years ago, they were able to build on the research that has been done in the meantime for their comprehensive discussion of the interconnections between the two regions, including the Brazilian diaspora in West Africa. Nevertheless, there still are gaps in the historiography. One area that remains understudied is the Brazilian settlement in the coastal parts of present-day Ghana (research having so far focused on the immigration to Togo, Benin and Nigeria), with the exception of an article by Alcione Amos and E. Ayesu, which however focuses on the twentieth century (Amos/Ayesu 2002). Another notable absence in the historiography is studies on the role of the Brazilians in the establishment of Islam on the West African coast.

2. The Bight of Benin and Brazil in the era of the slave trade

The Brazilian diaspora on the West African coast was a highly heterogeneous group of people in terms of race, class, and geographical origins. They included Brazilians of African origin who had been liberated from slavery and returned to the West African coast, descendants of (white) Brazilians by African wives, free Africans who had been educated in Brazil and Africans who acquired the Portuguese language and Brazilian cultural mores in Africa. Moreover, the "Brazilian" community also absorbed the descendants of immigrants from outside Brazil, not only from metropolitan Portugal and other lusophone territories but also from non-lusophone territories, such as Spain and Cuba. However, the Brazilian influence was the strongest and assimilated the others, due to the overwhelming numbers of Brazilian immigrants in the nineteenth century.

Why was the (re)immigration to West Africa from Brazil so much greater than from elsewhere? Two factors explain this overwhelming Brazilian influence in the Bight of Benin and shall be discussed in the following. These were, first, the close connection of the two regions in the transatlantic slave trade and, secondly, the relatively easy access for slaves to manumission in Brazil. The close link between West Africa and Brazil in the transatlantic slave trade becomes clear already from the sheer numbers of slaves transported from the one region to the other. Over the whole period of the transatlantic slave trade, about 1,900,000 million slaves were exported from the Bight of Benin. Of these, about 1,400,000, that is roughly 60%, were taken to Brazil. This compares to around 20% of slaves who were taken to the French Caribbean, mainly to Saint Domingue (the present-day Haiti), and 1% taken to the British Caribbean (Eltis/Richardson 1997: 20-21; cf. Law 2004c: 126; Law/Mann 1999: 312). Within Brazil, the Bight of Benin's orientation was predominantly to the northeastern province of Bahia with its main port Salvador. One reason for this was the geographical closeness of the two regions. Another one, according to Verger, was the important role-played by a certain kind of Bahian tobacco in the trade. This tobacco, which was of inferior quality and therefore prepared in a special way, was much requested in the Bight of Benin and gave the Portuguese/Brazilian traders an advantage over their European competitors there (Verger 1964: 7-9; 1968: 28-38).

A more detailed analysis of the volume of the trade shows that the Bight of Benin's orientation towards Bahia was particularly marked from the 1790s to the mid-nineteenth century. In the second half of the eighteenth century, only that of the French rivalled the Brazilian trade in the region. However, French involvement in the slave trade was ended by the slave insurrection in St. Domingue of 1791 and the subsequent abolition of the slavery in the French territories. Moreover, the closure of the slave market in St. Domingue boosted the Brazilian influence in the Bight of Benin not only because with the French the main rival had left the coast, but also because it caused a sugar boom in Bahia which until then had been a backwater of sugar production. Between 1791 and 1830, almost 390,000 slaves were imported into Bahia, the largest part of whom came from the Bight of Benin (Eltis 1987: 243-244; Lovejoy 1994: 154-157).

Significantly, this trade was carried out directly between the Bight of Benin and Brazil, rather than metropolitan Portugal. The Portuguese fort at Ouidah, the Bight of Benin's major port, was administered by the Viceroy of Brazil and staffed by personnel from Brazil. Even the communication between the Bight of Benin and Portugal went via Bahia, as did the Bight of Benin's communication other Brazilian ports, such as Rio de Janeiro. Robin Law and Kristin Mann, and Pierre Verger before them, have emphasized the bilateral and regular nature of the relations between the Bight of Benin and Bahia during the era of the slave trade. These were not just commercial networks, but the trade also fostered social relations and cultural exchange between the two regions:

> Just as slaves carried African religions and Islam as well as material culture and ritual practices into the Americas, so slave traders introduced literacy, numeracy, Christianity, European languages, new consumer goods, artisan knowledge, and building styles to the Slave Coast (Law/Mann 1999: 313, 314; Verger 1968: 127-245).

During the period of the illegal slave trade, the Brazilian influence in the Bight of Benin had increased even further, both in real and relative terms. From the 1790s, the European nations that had traded in the Bight of Benin one by one abolished the trade. The Spanish and the Portuguese were the last to do so, but by the mid-1820s all interested European nations (including Brazil, which had seceded from Portugal rule in 1822) had officially banned the trade on the West African

coast. As a consequence of the abolition of this trade, the French and the English abandoned their forts at Ouidah in 1797 and 1812 respectively. The authorities from the 1800s neglected the Portuguese fort at Ouidah, but unofficial agents from Brazil soon filled this gap and continued the trade illegally (Law 2004c: 160-163). Thus, due to the absence of the other Europeans, the Brazilian influence in the Bight of Benin became more pronounced in relative terms in the nineteenth century.

However, the Brazilian influence in the region also increased in real terms. This was due to the different operation of the illegal trade as compared to the period when it was legal. Due to the efforts mainly by cruisers of the British navy to suppress the trade by patrolling the African coast and capturing suspected slave vessel, the trade became a highly risky enterprise. On the Brazilian side, this led to a concentration of the trade in the hands of a few Bahian firms. On the West African coast, it made necessary the presence of agents on the spot, as it became vital for the slavers to load the vessels quickly before the cruisers of the British anti-slave trade squadron could detect them. Therefore, slaves were bulked on shore and whole shiploads were held in readiness to be loaded within a few hours (rather than as before, when the filling of a ship could take several weeks or even months, depending on the arrival of slaves from the interior). The greater need for coordination made necessary the presence of agents on the spot, causing an influx of Brazilian traders into the Bight of Benin in the early nineteenth century (Law/Mann 1999: 322-324).

The second major factor that helps to explain the overwhelming scale of the Brazilian (re)immigration to West Africa in the nineteenth century is internal to Brazilian society. This was the relatively easy access for slaves to manumission, as compared to other slave societies in the Americas. While slavery in Brazil was just as exploitative and harsh as elsewhere, Brazilian slaves stood a much higher chance than slaves on North American or Caribbean plantations of ending their days in freedom, either by being manumitted by their masters or by purchasing their freedom themselves. The latter option, the purchase of their freedom, was a possibility particularly for urban slaves, who enjoyed greater independence than plantation slaves and therefore had more opportunities to earn and save money. Moreover, urban slaves organized themselves in self-help cooperatives, ethnic associations

and religious brotherhoods, which worked as banks and lending institutions and assisted them in purchasing their emancipation. While most of the slaves who gained their freedom in this way were Creoles, which means that they had been born in Brazil, emancipation was also a possibility for African-born slaves. Due to the greater facility of achieving emancipation, there were a large number of ex-slaves living in the urban centres in Brazil, who earned their living as artisans (bakers, tailors, coopers, carpenters, and masons), petty traders and merchants. It was mainly from among these people that the "returnees" came (Turner 1975: 11-12, 26-27; Lindsay 1994: 25; Lovejoy 1994: 154; Verger 1968: 515-542).

3. Pioneers of Brazilian settlement in West Africa: The slave traders

The origins of the Brazilian diaspora on the West African coast lie in the large-scale immigration of ex-slaves from Brazil from the 1830s. However, individual Portuguese and Brazilian traders settled in the region already from the late eighteenth century. Although they were comparatively few, these traders became an important factor in coastal life and prepared the ground for the settlement of the ex-slaves. As discussed above, following the legal banning of the slave trade there was an influx of greater numbers of traders who acted as agents for Brazilian firms. Initially, these new agents came from Brazil and other lusophone territories. From the 1820s, with the rise of the Cuban slave trade, Spaniards and Cubans joined them. On the coast, the traders concentrated at Ouidah and Lagos, which were the main ports of the slave trade on the West African coast in the period.

At Ouidah, the illegal slave trade and the Brazilian settlement centred around one particular individual. This was Francisco Felix de Souza (d. 1849), the most notorious of the traders, who has fascinated contemporary observers and historians alike. De Souza was a Brazilian who had come to the West African coast around the turn of the century. For a few years in the 1800s he had been employed as an official in the Portuguese fort at Ouidah, but had then established himself as an independent trader in the illegal trade to Brazil and Cuba. In 1818, following a dispute with the Dahomean monarch, Adandozan, he supported the latter's brothers, Gezo, in a successful coup d'état by

which Adondozan was deposed. Gezo became the new ruler of Dahomey and rewarded de Souza by making him his agent for the slave trade at Ouidah, an office that came to be referred to as "Chacha". This privilege, together with his international commercial connections, became the basis for de Souza's domination of the illegal trade and his great influence in the Bight of Benin until the 1840s. He worked in association or competition with other Brazilian, Portuguese and Spanish traders at Ouidah, such as Joaquim Telles de Menezes, who married one of de Souza's daughters, and Juan José Zangronis, a Spaniard from Havana (Law 2004a: 190-200; 2004c: 165-179). De Souza founded three quarters in Ouidah, Brazil (today's "Blézin"), Zomaï and Maro. The Brazil quarter was the location of his family home and until today is settled by his descendants and those of his free clients and slaves. Zomaï is remembered to have been built as his country home and storehouse for goods, and is still settled by the descendants of his slaves. The Maro quarter was settled by returned ex-slaves, as whose patron he acted (Law 2004c: 183-184). Besides these quarters in Ouidah, he also owned places elsewhere that were settled by members of his extensive family and by slaves, such as Adjido at Little Popo and Zomaï at Agoué, attesting to his influence beyond Ouidah's (and Dahomey's) boundaries (Strickrodt 2004: 218-220).

In the 1830s and 1840s, Lagos overtook Ouidah in the volume of slave exports. This was due to the destruction of the Oyo Empire in the interior in the early nineteenth century, which was followed by wars that generated large numbers of slaves, mainly Yoruba, who were sold into the transatlantic trade. This booming slave trade attracted many Portuguese, Brazilian and Spanish traders, of whom some twenty-two were documented at Lagos during the 1830s (Law/Man 1999: 324, citing House of Commons Sessional Papers 1831-1839). The leading trader among them was José Domingos Martins (d. 1864), a Brazilian who had come to the West African coast in early 1830s. He was said to have arrived destitute, as part of the crew of a slave vessel that had been captured by the British navy and put on shore at Ouidah. He had first at Ouidah on de Souza's charity for a few years, but in the late 1830s had moved to Lagos where he prospered in the trade (Ross 1965: 79; Law 2004a: 203).

A major change occurred in the settlement pattern of the slave traders in the Bight of Benin in the 1840s with the decentralization of

the trade from Ouidah. This was caused by new legislation employed by the British in their effort to suppress the trade, specifically the Equipment Act of 1839. This act enabled the British navy to detain suspicious Portuguese slave vessels that carried equipment for the trade (such as water containers, wood for slave decks and chains), while before 1839 vessels actually had to have slaves on board to be liable to capture. In reaction to this new legislation, the traders dispersed from Ouidah, which was under close surveillance from the anti-slave trade patrol, to the settlements to the east and the west. There, they established secondary bases from where to ship slaves with less risk. Most of the slaves still came from Dahomey via Ouidah, from where they were transported to the respective points of embarkation by canoes along the coastal lagoon that connected most of the port towns. To the west of Ouidah, slave traders are documented from the 1840s at Little Popo, Agoué, and Grand Popo, and, to the east, at Godomey, Cotonou, Porto Novo and Badagry. Among them were Isidore and Antonio de Souza, two of Francisco Felix de Souza's sons, who established themselves at Little Popo and Agoué in the early 1840s. Several other traders are documented at Little Popo and Agoué in the 1840s and 1850s. They include the Brazilian José Francisco dos Santos, nicknamed "Zé Alfaiate" (José the tailor) because after his arrival on the coast he had worked for de Souza as a tailor, and Domingo Mustiche, a Spaniard. However, the most prominent trader at Agoué in the 1840s was Joaquim d'Almeida (d. 1857) alias "Zoki Azata", a liberated slave from Brazil. He was a Mahi from Hoko, to the north of Dahomey, who as a child had been captured by the Dahomeans and sold into slavery to Bahia. He had been bought by a Brazilian slave captain, Joaquim Manoel d'Almeida, who traded between Brazil and the West African coast. Joaquim d'Almeida was also employed in this trade. He served his master well and assumed the latter's name. After his liberation, he continued in the trade. In 1845, he finally returned to the West African coast, settling at Agoué (Strickrodt 2004: 221; Turner 1975: 102-105). Grand Popo became a secondary base of Joaquim Antonio, a Spaniard established at Ouidah, and a "Senôr Carvallio" was reported at the neighbouring village of Hévé in 1852 (Strickrodt 2004: 222). To the east of Ouidah, Francisco Felix de Souza shipped slaves from Godomey and Cotonou. After his death in 1849, his sons Isidoro and Antonio assumed control of theses

two places (Law 2004a: 199-200). From 1846, Porto Novo became the base of José Domingos Martins, who had formerly traded at Lagos. Following de Souza's death, he became the leading slave trader in the Bight of Benin (Law 2004a: 203; Ross 1965: 83).

Furthermore, slave traders were active at the far eastern end of the Slave Coast, in the Volta region. In 1844, the Governor of the Danish settlements on the Gold Coast passed along the Slave Coast on his return home and noted Portuguese flags flying at Woe and Atoko, two settlements in the Anlo region to the east of the River Volta. Woe was the base of José Mora. According to Danish reports he was a Spaniard, although this does not tally with the Portuguese flag flying at Woe or with local traditions recorded in the late nineteenth century, which remembered him as a "Portuguese" (Carstensen 1965: 5-6, 10, 15; Greene 1996: 74; Spiess 1907: 207). Atoko was the base of João Gonçalves Baeta, a trader from Bahia, between 1840 and 1850.

In the 1850s, several important developments affected the illegal slave trade and the Brazilian community in the Bight of Benin. First, due to the increasingly aggressive anti-slave trade measures of the British, the trade in the Volta region and at Lagos ended and many of the slave traders located to the ports on the central Slave Coast. In the Volta region, the British took over the fort at Keta from the Danes in 1850. By the following year, Baeta had left Atoko for Elmina Chica, some miles to the east of Keta. By 1856, he had relocated to Agoué (Strickrodt 2004: 59). Mora had left Woe for Ouidah already in 1845, following a dispute with the Danish (Jones/Sebald 2005: 49-50, no. 1.47). Lagos dropped out of the slave trade after the bombardment of the town by the British in December 1851 and the installation of a British consulate (Law 2001a: 30).

Second, in 1850 the Brazilian slave market closed due to effective legislation ending the illegal importation of slaves. This materially affected the traders on the coast. Some of them turned to legitimate trade, such as Francisco dos Santos at Ouidah. Others left the coast and returned to Brazil. An example is João Gonçalves Baeta, who became an agent for dos Santos in Bahia, where he took care not only of the latter's business but also of his elderly mother (Verger 1952: 53-100). Nevertheless, the illegal slave trade in the Bight of Benin continued for another decade or so, due to the revival of the Cuban trade in the 1850s. This trade was differently organized. It was con-

trolled by firms in the US that used American vessels. It also used new agents, mainly Portuguese, who arrived in the Bight of Benin in the 1850s where they replaced the old ones. Sometimes even in a literal sense: Francisco José Medeiros (d. 1875), a Portuguese from Madeira who established himself at Agoué in the 1850s, is remembered to have occupied Baeta's house. De Medeiros worked in association with João Soares Pereira, a Portuguese. One of the old traders who managed to enter this new trade was Samuel Costa Soares (d. 1894), Portuguese by origin and a natural citizen of the United States who was based at Ouidah (Law 2001a: 30-31, Strickrodt 2004: 224). Another old-established trader working in the Cuban trade, if perhaps only in a subordinate role, was Francisco Olympio da Silva (d. 1907), a Brazilian who had formerly worked for Baeta in the Volta region. In the early 1860s he was established at Porto Seguro, a small port to the west of Little Popo which in the period was used as an embarkation point for shipments of slaves (Borghero 1997: 124-125; Strickrodt 2004: 222).

Although comparatively small in numbers, the Brazilian, Portuguese, and Spanish traders played an important role in the creation of a Brazilian diaspora in the Bight of Benin. They were an important factor in the economic, political and social life of the region, establishing extensive trade networks along the coast as well as across the Atlantic Ocean. The most successful and prosperous of them had large entourages of followers who became part of the Brazilian community. They founded large families, marrying polygamously and fathering large numbers of children with African women. Francisco Felix de Souza had 63 children baptized and Joaquim d'Almeida 82 (Souza 1992: 109; Verger 1992: 47). They also had many slaves who often assumed their master's name and – if offered the chance – embraced their master's lifestyle. A well-documented example is Geraldo da Lima (d. 1904), who was a domestic slave of Cesar Cerqueira da Lima (d. 1862), a Brazilian trader in the Volta region. Following his master's death, Geraldo assumed his name, inherited the part of his fortune that was left in Africa, including his wife, and continued the business very successfully (Amenumey 1968; Claridge 1915: i, 548; Greene 1996: 127-134). Some of these slaves had been brought from Brazil, such as José Paraiso who was Domingos Martins' barber, but most were Africans who had never left Africa (Law 2004b: 355; Turner 1975: 120-123). Furthermore, the slave traders attracted free

African dependents and clients who also became assimilated into the Brazilian community. For example, Pedro Felix d'Almeida of Little Popo was brought up in the de Souza's household, where he learnt to speak and write Portuguese. He eventually returned to Little Popo, where the family home remained, and prospered in trade. According to family tradition, he sent two of his sons to Portugal to be educated there (Law 2004c: 185; Souza 1992: 72; Turner 1975: 108-111). Another case is that of Pedro Kodjo alias Pedro Pinto da Silveira, who was a descendent of one of the ruling families of Little Popo and Agoué. According to family and Ouidah traditions, he entered the service of Francisco Felix de Souza and trained as a cooper. He returned to Agoué, where he unsuccessfully competed for the chieftaincy and started a civil war in the 1860s, and finally settled at Little Popo. One of his sons, Domingo Francisco da Silveira, worked for José Francisco dos Santos at Ouidah (Strickrodt 2003: 223-234; Turner 1975: 111-112).

4. The return of the ex-slaves

Some few ex-slaves from Brazil had arrived already in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Law/Mann 1999: 318-319). However, a large-scale immigration of emancipated slaves from Brazil occurred only after the slave insurrection in Bahia in 1835, which became known as the "Male" revolt. There had been a number of slave revolts in Bahia between 1807 and 1835, reflecting the growing discontent among slaves suffering from increasingly harsh working conditions during the sugar boom. In the Male revolt, both slaves and freed slaves had been involved. Following its suppression, harsh punishments were meted out to those who had participated or were thought to have participated in the revolt. There was a backlash particularly against the ex-slaves living in Bahia, who were increasingly regarded as a security risk by the authorities. Some of them were deported to West Africa, while those remaining found themselves targeted by a number of repressive measures, including the imposition of a head tax, curfews and prohibition of land purchases. Freed slaves had always been discriminated against, but this backlash prompted many to re-immigrate to West Africa.

This voluntary return movement (as distinguished from the deportations) of Brazilian ex-slaves lasted until the early decades of the twentieth century, although most of it occurred in the nineteenth century. The precise volume of this movement is not known, due to the lack of exact statistical material, and the estimates of scholars vary greatly. Turner assumed the number of returnees to be about 4,000 (1975: 85). According to Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, 3,500 ex-slaves returned to West Africa between 1820 and 1850, and 4, 578 individuals (3,000 Africans and 1,278 Creoles) between 1850 and 1899 (Carneiro da Cunha, Manuela 1985: 213). Turner shows that although most of the freed people in Bahia were Creoles, that is Brazilian-born individuals of African extraction, African-born ex-slaves made up roughly three-fifths of the returnees between 1850 and 1880. This shows that for African-born slaves in Brazil, their allegiance remained with their African home societies and cultures, while for slaves born in Brazil, the return to a country which they knew only from the reports of their parents and fellow slaves was a much more daunting step. In fact, many of the Creoles who left for West Africa were children accompanying their parents. According to Turner, relying on data from passport applications, in the period between 1850 and 1860 the average age of applicants was approximately 35 years. In the later nineteenth century, the average age (computed from passengers' lists and ship's registries) was much higher, close to 55 years. This indicates a difference in the motivation for re-immigration to West Africa: while the younger immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century went to West Africa to start a new life, the elderly returnees in the late nineteenth-century went to there in order to die and to be buried in the land of their ancestors (Turner 1975: 67-69).

In West Africa, some of the ex-slaves returned to their homelands in the interior. Most, however, remained on the coast where they tended to concentrate in certain towns, with Agoué, Ouidah, Porto Novo and Lagos becoming major centres of Brazilian settlement. As already noted above, some returnees also landed on the Gold Coast to the west of the River Volta. For example, in 1836 the captain of the Nimrod landed his passengers, more than 160 voluntary returnees, at Elmina and Winnebah, both on the Gold Coast, as well as at Agoué (Verger 1968: 361). Accra also became host to a community of Brazil-

ian ex-slaves, with the first immigrants from Bahia, mainly Muslim deportees, arriving in 1836 (Parker 2000: 14).

There are several reasons for the ex-slaves' settlement on the coast rather than the interior. First, a return to their homelands in the interior would have meant exposing themselves to the risk of being enslaved again (Carneiro da Cunha, Manuela 1985: 107). Secondly, the coastal settlements offered them better opportunities to make a living, given that most of them had formerly lived in urban Salvador as artisans or traders (Turner 1975: 76-77). Thirdly, it could be argued that it was precisely presence of the Brazilian, Portuguese and Spanish slave traders that made the coastal settlements attractive to the ex-slaves, given the cultural affinity between the two groups, most importantly the shared Portuguese language and the Catholic faith, and the patronage and employment offered by the traders.

From our point of view, this affinity between slave traders and former slaves may seem ironic and difficult to understand, just as the fact that many of the returned ex-slaves engaged in the slave trade. However, it was not ironic. As has been pointed out by historians, the ex-slaves were inherently pragmatic and tried to make a living and better their situation under very harsh conditions. For most, the return to Africa meant the arrival in a strange country, where they suffered abuse and extortion from the local African authorities and risked not only their property but often enough their freedom and even their lives (Lindsay 1994: 28-29; Turner 1975: 134; Verger 1968: 613-615). In Brazil, their ethnic identities had been important, although not as important as their religious affiliation. There, they had been Africans, and specifically Yoruba, Hausa, Fon, etc. On the West African coast, they became Brazilians, as their language, religion and culture unified them with the white traders and set them apart from the African population of the countries that they had "returned" to, even if they often retained a sense of their specific African ethnicity.

The fortunes of these people on the West African coast depended on a number of factors. According to Turner, those who arrived earlier in the century tended to prosper while those arriving later in the century were less successful and often had to eke out their living. This can probably be explained partly at least with the fact, referred to above, that the latter were predominantly elderly people who came to Africa to end their life rather than start a new one. Another explana-

tion, however, is the fact that those arriving in the mid-nineteenth century experienced a period when the illegal slave trade was still flourishing and the Brazilian, Portuguese, and Cuban slave traders prospered and had great influence. This was before the take-over of coast's external trade by European firms in the 1860s and 1870s, which ended the Brazilians' ascendance and the Bight of Benin's commercial orientation towards Brazil. Another factor that affected the ex-slaves' careers on the West African coast was the location, as conditions differed significantly in the various coastal settlements.

Ouidah, Dahomey's port, was strictly controlled by African authorities. It is documented to have been the destination of 200 deportees after the Male revolt in 1835 (Reis 1993: 220). In 1845, the British explorer Duncan noted the presence there of "numerous" ex-slaves from Brazil, most of whom had been expelled due to their involvement in the revolt (Duncan 1968: i, 185, 201-202). Francisco Felix de Souza is remembered to have been the patron of the ex-slaves, who settled mainly in the Maro quarter. Even today, there live several families in this quarter who trace their origins to Brazilian ex-slaves (some recognizable by their names, such as Toubiaz and Neves, while others have African names, such as Oloubon, Ougidan and Dangana). Some few ex-slaves also settled in de Souza's quarter as his clients (Law 2001a: 26-27; 2004c: 179-183).

Agoué was a relatively young settlement. It had been founded only in the 1820s and played an important role in the slave trade in the 1840s and 1850s. According to local traditions recorded in the 1930s/1940s, the first ex-slaves arrived there during the reign of chief Toyi (Yaovi Siko), who is said to have ruled from 1835 to 1844 (Pelofy 2002: 6-7). In 1863, the Catholic missionary Francesco Borghero visited the place and reported that there were "some hundred Christians, all returned from Brazil after their liberation" (Borghero 1997: 123). In a striking difference to the Brazilian settlement at Ouidah, the ex-slaves at Agoué founded several quarters where they settled largely according to their ethnicity. Fon, Mahi and Yoruba settled at Fonkome, (Muslim) Yoruba at Diata (or Idi-Ata) and Hausa, Mahi and Yoruba at Hausakome. Apart from these three quarters, there was Zokikome, which belonged to Joaquim d'Almeida, the most prominent and prosperous of Agoué's Brazilians. Then there was Yakome, the quarter of Iya Francesca Mondukpe (d. 1899), a Yoruba slave who

became assimilated into the Brazilian community through her successive marriages to two ex-slaves from Brazil, Antonio Pereira Santos and Manuel dos Reis (Guran 2000: 56-57; Pierucci 1953: 24; Westermann 1935: 230-231). These quarters were known collectively to contemporary European observers as "Portuguese town", which was distinguished from the "English town" settled by returnees from Sierra Leone (Strickrodt 2004: 225-229).

Porto Novo, to the east of Ouidah on the Ouémé River, also became a centre of Brazilian settlement, but it is not so well researched as Ouidah, Agoué, or Lagos. It appears that the settlement occurred there only later. By 1884, there were about one hundred repatriates there, mostly Brazilians but including some Sierra Leoneans (Law 2004a: 55). According to Turner, life in the Porto Novo kingdom was more difficult for the Brazilians than in Agoué or Ouidah because they were barred from engaging in agriculture and were thus restricted to commercial pursuits. As few of the ex-slaves were able to compete with the European commercial firms that had established themselves on the coast by the 1880s, many ex-slaves occupied the roles of artisans or mechanics (Turner 1975: 137-139).

Lagos boasted the largest Brazilian community in the Bight of Benin. According to the British governor, in 1889 there were about 5,000 returnees from Brazil and Cuba (Lindsay 1994: 27, citing Moloney 1889: 268-269). They settled mainly in the Brazil quarter (just as at Accra). The situation for the Brazilian ex-slaves at Lagos differed from that at Ouidah and Agoué due to the British influence at the former place after 1851. On the one hand, life was easier for the returnees in the British protectorate as they were not so prone to extortion and abuse. This probably explains why there were such a large number of immigrants there. On the other hand, there was great competition from Sierra Leonean immigrants, that is former slaves who had been captured by the British navy's anti-slave trade squadron on slave vessels, had been taken to Sierra Leone and liberated there. The majority of these slaves were Yoruba, who from the mid-nineteenth century returned to Yoruba land, many of them settling in Lagos. Being Anglophone, Protestant and trained in the British system, they fitted in better with life under British. This situation put the Brazilians at Lagos under great pressure to assimilate, as is indicated, among others, by the fact that many anglicised their names (as did the Brazilian immi-

grants at Accra who also lived under British rule) (Carneiro da Cunha, Manuela 1985: 101-151; Lindsay 1994; Soumonni 2003; 2005; Turner 1975: 140-151; Verger 1968: 612-632).

5. The impact of the Brazilians on West African coastal society

The Brazilians became a major factor in the economic, political and cultural life of West African coastal society in the period before the European colonial take-over. Their influence on the regions' economic life is obvious. Until the end of the illegal slave trade in the Bight of Benin in the mid-1860s, they dominated the region's export trade. They were able to do this due to their extensive trade networks across the Atlantic. These, of course, were the white slave traders, although there was one major exception: Joaquim d'Almeida at Agoué, a former slave who became a shipper of slaves. Indeed, a British naval officer who visited the Bight of Benin in 1850 referred to Agoué as "a slave-port, almost a monopoly of José *[sic]* d'Almeida" (Forbes 1966: i, 102). However, the returned ex-slaves also became a major influence in the regions' economic life. At Agoué, Borghero noted in 1863 that they "tend to become masters of the trade" (1997: 124). By this he presumably referred to the trade in agricultural produce, although many of the ex-slaves also dabbled in the slave trade, if only in small-scale, buying and re-selling slaves as opportunity offered (Pierucci 1953: 16). As regards the produce trade, this involved palm oil for export as well as provisions. Both were produced on farms by means of slaves. According to Turner, land and the plantation economy that was associated with it became the basis for status identification within the Brazilian community (Turner 1975: 138). The most prosperous of the returnees owned a large number of slaves. For example, the will of Antonio d'Almeida (d. 1890), a Yoruba ex-slave who in Brazil had belonged to the same master as Joaquim d'Almeida, shows that his farm *(roça)* at Agoué that was worked by eighteen male slaves and six female slaves (Verger 1992: 123; cf. Strickrodt 2004: 226-227). Iya Francesca Mondukpe, already referred to above, is remembered in local traditions to have grown rich and influential in Agouè society from selling the produce of her plantations that were worked by many slaves (Westermann 1935: 230-231). However, as noted before, not all of the ex-slaves prospered on the West African

coast. The Brazilian community was socially and economically stratified. Ownership of land and agricultural pursuits were important particularly for the Brazilians at Agoué and Ouidah, while those at Porto Novo and Lagos often found themselves restricted to (petty) trade and the crafts. The Brazilians played an important role in the introduction of a range of crafts to the West African coast because many the returned ex-slaves were trained or semi-trained artisans. Among the men, there were stone masons, master builders, carpenters, cabinetmakers, tailors, gold smiths and barber-surgeons, while the women were renowned needle workers and cooks ("quituteiras") (Carneiro da Cunha, Manuela 1985: 136).

Due to their control of the trade, their wealth and, resulting from this, their ability to attract followers, the Brazilians also became a major factor in the political life in the Bight of Benin, particularly in Dahomey and Genyi. Again, this is most obvious in the case of the slave traders, particularly the most prominent ones, Francisco Felix de Souza and Domingos Martins, who are also best documented. In de Souza's case, several instances are documented where he actively interfered in local political conflicts and were his support is remembered to have secured victory for his allies. Firstly, in 1818, he supported Gezo in the coup d'état by which the Dahomean ruler, Adandozan, was deposed (Law 2004c: 165-166). Secondly, in 1823, he supported the African trader George Lawson alias Akuété Zankli in a civil war at Little Popo, which resulted in the defeat and expulsion of Lawson's adversary from the town (Strickrodt 2004: 188-200). Domingos Martins, too, is recorded to have attempted to influence local politics. In 1846 or 1847, he sent an army of followers to Lagos in support of the deposed ruler Akitoye, but this effort failed. Both de Souza and Martins played an important part in the formulation of Dahomey's relations towards Europeans, due to their role as the king's advisers on trade, which was the basis of Dahomey's relations with the Europeans (Ross 1965: 80). The slave traders sometimes strengthened their relations to local political authorities by marriage. For example, one of de Souza's wives, the mother of his eldest son Isidoro, was the daughter of a chief at Little Popo. In Dahomey, some of the wealthy traders, such as de Souza, Domingos Martins and Francisco dos Santos, were officially made "caboceers", i.e. chiefs, and their political role thus became formalized. However, even where the Bra-

zilians did not gain official positions in the local political hierarchy, they became an important political factor in the coastal towns – although of course this differed according to the local political conditions at the respective settlements. At Agoué, a relative young and small settlement whose economy depended on the slave trade, the Brazilians had much clout, while at Lagos, under British rule, they had very little influence.

The cultural impact of the Brazilians on West Africa coastal life has been widely discussed in the literature. Three aspects are particularly interesting: the introduction of Christianity and Islam to the coastal settlements, the establishment of schools and the Brazilian influence on architecture. The Brazilians pioneered the introduction of Roman Catholicism and of Islam to the coastal settlements. Many returned ex-slaves were Roman Catholics, having been baptized in Brazil. They brought their religion with them and established the first chapels, prior to the arrival of Catholic missions from Europe. According to local interpretations, the first Catholic chapel at Agoué was established in 1835 by a female ex-slave from Brazil (Bouche 1885: 266). In 1845, another chapel was opened there by Joaquim d'Almeida, for the use of his family. Francesco Borghero, a missionary of the French Société des Missions Africaines that had arrived at Ouidah in 1861, was impressed by it. According to him, the chapel "was lavishly decorated for this country, nothing was missing". D'Almeida "had brought or made come from Brazil all that is necessary for establishing a church, even the bells" (Borghero 1997: 123, 251). D'Almeida had reportedly planned to establish a larger chapel for public use, but he died before being able to do so. At Lagos, too, a Roman Catholic chapel was established by a Brazilian returnee before the arrival of the first ordained Catholic missionary in 1863 (Carneiro da Cunha, Manuela 1985: 162-170; Turner 1975: 169-174).

However, the French missionaries were generally critical of the Brazilians' practice of Christianity. Borghero was

> very pained to see that these black and white Portuguese who call themselves Christians live exactly like the pagans for the most part. The whites from Portugal just as all the other Europeans are polygamous, their descendants, who have become almost black, have as their religion a monstrous blend of paganism, Christian practices and fetishist superstitions (Borghero 1997: 46 [my translation]; Law 2004b: 358).

The Brazilians had a syncretistic understanding of religion, mixing Christianity with elements of their African ancestral religions, as they had done in Brazil. There were typical Brazilian, and specifically Bahian, traits in their Catholic worship. Furthermore, they adapted to local African practices, as shown by the fact that Francisco Felix de Souza and Joaquim d'Almeida were buried in their houses rather than the Christian graveyard, following local African custom rather than Christian rites (Verger 1992: 45-46, 48).

The Brazilians also played a pioneering role in introducing Islam to some of the settlements, such as Accra, Agoué, and Ouidah (Law 2004b: 359-360). There were many Muslims among the returned ex-slaves, who after the Male rebellion in Bahia were perceived to be a particular threat and therefore more liable to deportation. At Accra, the arrival of Brazilian ex-slaves, mainly deportees, in 1836 represented the first influx of Muslims. According to Parker, they settled in the Brazil quarter and integrated into Ga society while retaining a distinct identity due to their adherence to Islam. By contrast, Hausa traders and other Muslim groups which subsequently joined them from the interior settled in a different quarter, Zongo, and remained aloof from local Ga society (Parker 2000: 83, 164-165). Likewise, local tradition at Ouidah recalls that some Brazilian ex-slaves who settled in the Maro quarter introduced Islam. Muslims from the north arrived only later, during the period of French colonial rule (Law 2004b: 359; 2004c: 182). At Agoué, Zöller noted the large number of Muslims in 1884. By the early twentieth century, there were mosques in two of the quarters settled by Brazilians, Idi-Ata, settled mainly by Yoruba, and Hausakome. The "great mosque", in Idi-Ata, was built in 1905, "a beautiful building of 8 x 10 metres […], surrounded by a beautiful covered veranda, and all in bricks; a roof of corrugated iron covers the whole ensemble, which looks very nice" (Marty 1926: 119; Pierucci 1953: 11-12; Strickrodt 2004: 227). At other places, however, such as Porto Novo and Lagos, Islam already existed before the arrival of the Afro-Brazilians, having been introduced directly from the interior. Nevertheless, Brazilian Muslims were prominent in these communities, too, particularly the family of José Paraiso in Porto-Novo (Law 2004b: 359-360; Turner 1975: 120-123).

As Catholicism became an important badge of Brazilian identity, Muslims sometimes had their children baptized. This is illustrated by

the information given in the baptismal registers of the Catholic Missions at Agoué. They list 60 ex-slaves from Brazil (heads of families) who had settled at Agoué, of whom 8-10 individuals were Muslims who nevertheless had been baptized. It was nothing unusual to have Catholics, Protestants and Muslims all in one family. Manoel Geraldo's family was reported to comprise "Muslims and some rare Christians", while João do Rego, a Hausa, left "a large family of Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants". This attests to the spirit of religious tolerance that existed in the Brazilian community on the West African coast.

The Brazilians also established schools for the instruction of their children as they valued education highly. Of particular importance for them was the teaching of the Portuguese language, not only because it was their own language but also because it was the *lingua franca* in the Bight of Benin and therefore fundamental for a successful commercial career. At Agoué, a school, attended by 30 children, is documented in 1863 (Borghero 1997: 276). It was funded by Francisco José de Medeiros, a locally based slave trader from Madeira, and was staffed by a schoolmaster from Brazil, Micer Gonsallos, "a black Brazilian priest […] who occupied himself mainly with the catechism and the Portuguese school". He died about 1870, "leprous and venerated by all" (Pelofy 2002: 7, 22). Borghero was unimpressed by school, complaining, "alas, the children… did not know one prayer or one article of the catechism" (Borghero 1997: 276). This indicates that education at the school was secular rather than religious.

Another aspect of coastal cultural life that was influenced by the Brazilians – and which has been discussed extensively in the literature – is architectural style (Carneiro da Cunha, Marianno 1985; Law 2004b: 187-188; Soumonni 2003: 186-187). Many of the principal buildings in the coastal communities, such as trader's houses, chapels and mosques, were built in the Brazilian, and particularly Bahian, style. Characteristically, the houses (called "sobrados") had two stores, a portal, shutters and ornaments. The knowledge and skill for this had been brought to West Africa by ex-slaves from Brazil who had been trained as carpenters and masons. Some of the prominent Brazilian traders on the coast also sent African slaves to be trained as artisans to Brazil. The Brazilian-style houses were noted by contemporary visitors. For example, in 1850, João Gonçalves Baêta's house

at Atoko was reported to stand in "strange contrast" to the "beehive huts" of his neighbours, as it consisted of two stores with five upper rooms, was made of clay and surrounded by a clay wall that enclosed a front and a back yard. Even more impressive was Isidoro Felix de Souza's house at Little Popo in the 1840s. According to a British visitor, it contained

> a large hall, or principal apartment, beautifully arranged in the Spanish *[sic]* style, and richly furnished with European materials. Round this apartment were arranged prints, in rich gold frames, of Napoleon in his principal battles, as well as his disinterment at St. Helena, and second funeral in France … (Duncan 1968: i, 102).

However, this house was destroyed in an accidental fire in 1849 and not rebuilt as Isidoro left Little Popo for Ouidah to succeed his late father as "Chacha" (Jones/Sebald 2005: 119-120, no 1.225).

The construction of Roman Catholic churches and mosques by Brazilians is not surprising, given their pioneering role in the establishment of these religions in the region. For example, two Brazilian master builders, Lázaro Borges da Silva and Francisco Nobre, built the Cathedral at Lagos, the Holy Cross Church, inaugurated in 1881. Parts of its interior were fitted out by another Brazilian, Baltazar dos Reis, a famous carpenter who won a bronze medal at the Colonial Exposition of 1886 for an inlayed table (Carneiro da Cunha, Manuela 1985: 136, 156-158). The first Catholic church in Lomé was also built by a returnee from Brazil, Jacintho da Silva (Amos 2000: 183-184). A prominent example for a mosque in the Brazilian style is the central mosque at Porto Novo, which was constructed in the twentieth century. It was the source of conflict between the Brazilian and the indigenous Yoruba members of the Muslim community. The Brazilian Muslims managed to assert themselves, with the result that the mosque resembles the Brazilian model of the Roman Catholic Church that inspired it (Soumonni 2003: 187, 191 fig. 9.4).

The Brazilian architectural style still characterizes many buildings at Agoué, Ouidah, Porto Novo and Lagos these days. However, as has been noted elsewhere, it is uncertain whether any of these buildings date from the nineteenth century; most seem to have been built only later (Law 2004b: 187-188; Law/Mann 1999: 325).

6. Epilogue: the Brazilians in West Africa after the ending of the illegal slave trade

The illegal slave trade in the Bight of Benin ended in the 1860s, the last successful shipment of slaves being made in 1863 from Godomey. With the ending of the slave trade, some of the traders disappeared from the coast, while others switched to the palm oil trade. This in itself was not a major change, as the two trades had been carried on simultaneously by a number of traders for some time. However, the end of the transatlantic slave trade entailed a weakening of the ties with Brazil, as the main market for palm oil was industrial Europe. Moreover, the increasing dominance of European firms on the West African coast the 1860s and 1870s spelled the end for the Brazilian's ascendance and their economic independence (Law 2001: 31-32). Many of the children of Brazilians became agents of European commercial firms. The son of José dos Santos became an agent to the British firm of Swanzy, as did three of the sons Francisco of Olympio da Silva (who after the end of the slave trade shortened his name to "Olympio", deleting the "da Silva"). Another of the latter's sons worked for Miller Brothers. In the 1880s, a son of Francisco de Medeiros, Julio de Medeiros, served as agent to the firm of Goedelt, while Chico d'Almeida, of the D'Almeida family at Little Popo, worked for the German firm Hansa Faktorei (Amos 2000: 182; Law 2001a: 31-32; Zöller 1885: I, 169). Law has summarized this development succinctly, noting that the Brazilians

> were drawing upon their existing social capital, making their linguistic and commercial skills and their local contacts available to serve the interests of others, rather than being able any longer to sustain independent accumulation (Law 2001a: 31-32).

Following the establishment of colonial rule on the West African coast in the 1880s, the Brazilians maintained this position of middlemen between the Africans and the Europeans. Being pragmatists and well educated, they prospered under colonial rule. Many entered colonial service, others worked in the commercial sector or as artisans. Those who could afford it sent their children to Europe to study law or medicine. The colonial period was more difficult for them culturally, as the colonial powers did not tolerate the continuing Luso-Brazilian influence in their territories. For example, in 1882 the British at Lagos

prohibited the use of any language other than English for instruction in schools, a measure aimed mainly at the suppression of Portuguese (da Cunha Carneiro, Manuela 1985: 174). However, in spite of this – and perhaps because of this – it was in this period that a collective Brazilian identity developed, helped by the widespread practice of intermarriage and the foundation of cultural associations aimed at preserving the Brazilian heritage. Antonio Olinto, who stayed in Lagos a few years after the end of colonialism, has given a fascinating description of this community at a time when the last surviving returnees with first-hand experience of Brazil, by then septuagenarians and octogenarians, were slowly dying off, and with them the knowledge of the Portuguese language. For some of them, the memory of Brazil had become tinged with a yearning for the return to the country of their childhood – just as their parents, who in the nineteenth century had made the passage from Africa to Brazil as slaves, had yearned for a return to their homelands (Olinto 1964: 161-256).

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